

WELDON KOREA PEACE INITIATIVE

I. INTRODUCTION

On May 30 – June 2 a bipartisan congressional delegation comprised of six Members of the House of Representatives traveled to Pyongyang, North Korea (Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea/DPRK). The delegation, led by Congressman Curt Weldon (R-PA), included Solomon Ortiz (D-TX), Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), Joe Wilson (R-SC), Jeff Miller (R-FL) and Eliot Engel (D-NY). The delegation was the largest congressional delegation to visit the DPRK and the first CODEL to visit the DPRK in five years. The visit occurred during a period of escalating tensions between the DPRK, the United States, and nations of the region resulting from the DPRK October, 2002, admission of its nuclear weapons-related uranium enrichment program. Subsequent DPRK withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT); confirmation of its possession of nuclear weapons; expelling of IAEA inspectors; declared intentions to reprocess its spent fuel; continued sales of missiles and technology to terrorist nations; and allegations of nation-sponsored drug trafficking all served to further raise tensions between the DPRK and the international community.

Discussions with senior DPRK officials included the predictable hard line rhetoric associated with recent DPRK public statements, balanced discussion took place in the formal as well as more personal informal sessions. The demonstrated goodwill and willingness to go beyond first level posturing gave the delegation reason to believe that there are options that should be considered to avoid conflict and resolve critical outstanding issues in a way satisfactory to both sides. Concern exists that failure to address these critical issues in a timely manner could result in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and/or technology to terrorist organizations and States. DPRK officials repeatedly stated their belief that the Bush Administration seeks regime change in North Korea, "The Bush Administration finds regime change in different nations very attractive...and is trying to have regime change, one by one. This kind of conduct damages the U.S. image in the world and weakens the leadership role of the U.S. This is the heart of the question. If the U.S. would sign a non-aggression pact, we would give up nuclear programs and weapons." The DPRK seeks normalization of relations and non-interference with its economic relations with South Korea and Japan. **The issue of regime change is seen as the determining factor in whether a peaceful resolution to the current standoff is possible.**

II. PROPOSAL TO END THE TENSIONS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

During the trip to the DPRK, I developed and presented to our North Korean counterparts, a two step proposal to end the tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

A. STEP ONE

Five Simultaneous Actions to Begin the Peace Process:

1. The U.S. shall enter into a 1 year non-aggression pact with the DPRK.
2. The DPRK shall officially renounce its entire nuclear weapons and research program allowing for full and unimpeded inspections of its nuclear facilities. The inspections should result in a full inventory of DPRK nuclear facilities and locations including underground facilities. The inspections will be conducted by a designee of the United States government and will include a complete inventory of the DPRK's nuclear weapons and materials.
3. The DPRK must rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
4. The U.S., DPRK, South Korea, Japan, Russia and China (the Korean Peace Coalition), shall negotiate and ratify a comprehensive Korean economic development and security initiative to promote investment, economic growth, trade and humanitarian aid on the Korean peninsula. Funding levels for the initiative must be in the range of \$3-5 billion per year for the next 10 years. The cost of the initiative will be funded by the five member nations of the Korean Peace Coalition with participation from European partners. The largest percentage of the cost for the initiative should be provided by Japan and South Korea.
5. The U.S. shall officially recognize the government of the DPRK and open a mission in Pyongyang.

B. STEP TWO

Following the end of one year or the agreed upon time frame and the satisfactory completion of the inspection of DPRK facilities and locations, compilation of nuclear weapon and material inventories and ratification of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

1. The U.S. non-aggression pact becomes permanent.
2. DPRK shall sign the Missile Technology Control Regime.
3. The DPRK shall agree to observer status with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and lays out a timeframe for improving humanitarian rights in North Korea. Moreover, the DPRK shall agree to return all Japanese citizens currently being held against their will in North Korea. North Korea shall provide complete disclosure regarding the Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea.
4. A multi-lateral cooperative threat reduction program shall be developed by the five member nations of the Korean Peace Coalition to remove all DPRK nuclear weapons, materials, resources and capabilities within two years.
5. The United States Congress shall establish a direct inter-parliamentary relationship with members of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly for the express purpose of developing a plan to implement a broad range of comprehensive recommendations in the following areas:

Agricultural Development
Cultural/Educational Development
Defense and Security
Economic Development
Energy/Natural Resources
Environmental Cooperation
Health Care
Judicial/Legal Systems
Local Governments
Science and Technology
Space and Aeronautics

The recommendations shall be implemented by NGO's, academic institutions, National Associations, Health Care Organizations, and the United States Government.

III. CONCLUSION

Each of the senior DPRK officials with whom the delegation met cited the importance of the visit, given the current tense relationship between the DPRK and the U.S. They also noted their understanding of the role of Congress and that the delegation was not visiting to negotiate issues for the United States, but to enhance mutual understanding between the two nations.

Each of the senior DPRK officials noted the tense international situation and sought to place the blame on the U.S. "because the U.S. seeks to make us give up our military forces which safeguard our political system." Each of the leaders also cited their preference for the "Clinton approach" in the bilateral relationship and took strong exception to President Bush's inclusion of the DPRK as part of the "Axis of Evil." They stated their belief that such a characterization demonstrates that the U.S. is unwilling to "accommodate with our country" and the U.S. seeks regime change. "Further, the U.S. is enlisting other nations to prepare a nuclear first strike – seeking to blackmail and intimidate us...The U.S. does not want to coexist with us...And not only does the Bush Administration not want to coexist, but wishes to get rid of my nation with its nuclear strength...We see the U.S. preparing for a military strike...The U.S. must change its hostile policy." Without necessarily supporting the Bush Administration policies toward the DPRK, all members of the delegation agreed with Representative Engel's point to DPRK officials, that violations of the 1994 Agreed Framework by the DPRK were the reason for the current tensions, not Bush Administration policies.

The DPRK officials stated their belief that the situation can only be resolved by acceptance of the current leadership -- coexistence – and dialogue. And in the meantime it intends to continue to develop its "restraint capability" (nuclear deterrent). "We have tried dialogue and have been patient...Our willingness to meet in Beijing in April shows our flexibility to allow the U.S. to save face, showing our flexibility and sincerity to resolve the issues at any cost...We have not had concrete results. The Bush Administration has not responded to our request for bilateral talks -- they are more focused on our first giving up our nuclear program...This causes us to believe that the Bush Administration has not changed its policy about disarming my nation...We want to conclude a non-aggression treaty between the two countries and avoid a military strike on my country." Clearly, the entering of a non-aggression agreement by the United States and continued dialogue would send the message to North Korea that the goal of the United States is to have a nuclear free Korean Peninsula, and that such a goal can be achieved without war or regime change. It would also remove their only argument for continuing to pursue the development of nuclear weapons – a possible attack by the United States. Removing that argument would force the North Koreans to reveal their true intentions with respect to their nuclear program while simultaneously sending the message to the DPRK and America's detractors around the world that we are not intent on imposing our will around the globe with the use of force.

DPRK officials maintained that their nuclear program is only for deterrence and not being pursued to seek economic aid -- that "we only wish to be left alone. The nuclear issue is directly linked to the security of our nation...We need frank exchange on nuclear policies. Our purpose in having a restraint (deterrent) is related to the war in Iraq. This is also related to statements by the hawks within

the U.S. Administration. Our lesson learned is that if we don't have nuclear restraint (deterrent), we cannot defend ourselves."

Finally, it is essential that the five member nations of the Korean Peace Coalition continue to support increased levels of discussion and cooperation between North and South Korea and strive for the eventual normalization of relations between the DPRK and the rest of the world.